

CENTRAL SCOTLAND ISLAMIC CENTRE

# OPEN DAY 2008



It is a pleasure and honour for the Muslim community to open the doors of our Islamic Centre to the community of Central Scotland on this annual open day. We hope you enjoy your visit to the centre and we are also hopeful that you get an insight into our Muslim community, our culture and our way of life.

Islam is often misunderstood and misinterpreted. Few people, outside the Muslim community, get a chance to see Islam in any light other than the negative picture painted by the media. This open day is an attempt to give you an insight into the Muslim world and the functions of the Islamic Centre.

One of the aims of the open day is to provide an opportunity to build bridges within the hugely diverse and vibrant community of Central Scotland. It provides an opportunity to develop mutual respect, love and tolerance for each other as well as build new relationships whilst strengthening existing ones.

In this newsletter, we compiled some questions which are often asked at the open day and other events at the centre. These are a mixed set of questions which cover a varied range of subjects. If you don't find the answer you are looking for then please write your question on the feedback forms or even drop us an email.

\* Pbih means peace and blessing of Allah (God) be upon him

## Why do you have an Open Day?

The main objective of the Open Day is to bring different communities together. The Open Day allows anyone to come into the Islamic Centre and look around, meet the Muslim community, read about our faith, taste our food, experience their culture and ask any questions you may have.

By dispelling any misconceptions, interacting with the Muslim community and learning about some of the issues that Muslims hold dear, we come to a greater understanding of each other.

This works both ways because the Muslim community begins to understand the rest of the community of Stirling, the issues that they face and get an insight into their lives, thus bringing all communities together.

## Who funds the open day?

The open day is a wholly local community project which has no external funding nor external expertise. The Muslims of Stirling believe in the importance of this event and contribute with their time and effort.

On the back of the open day we have seen many relationships bear fruit over the years. We have a vibrant relationship with the different faith communities within Central Scotland and many joint projects have come into being through this.

## Are non Muslims allowed in the mosque generally?

Yes, many groups who visit the centre including groups from the NHS, Police, Fire service, churches and schools. The centre has always had a policy of openness and transparency. We have always welcomed

anyone who has expressed an interest in visiting or simply just wanting to talk about faith or non-faith related issues.

This openness and hospitality goes back all the way to the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Many groups of Muslims and Non-Muslims would visit the mosque in Madina and they were looked after by the Muslim community as guests.

Some people came to make treaties, some came to have a discussion whilst many came simply to visit Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This openness and constructive dialogue has been a foundation for developing lasting relationships which mutually benefits all participants.

## Does verse 8:12 from the Qur'an promote terrorism?

In the 2006 open-day a lady brought a newspaper clipping to show us, where a verse of the Qur'an was quoted. The verse read, *"I (God) will instil terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. Smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips"*

This verse was revealed about a specific historic incident about 1400 years ago. The Muslims were forced to leave Makkah and had to migrate to Madina. They left all their properties, wealth and belongings behind. A group of Muslims went to reclaim their belongings from the Makkan caravan. An army was prepared by the Makkans to attack this relatively small group of Muslims.

The Muslims were not armed for battle and were less than a third in size. The Makkans on the other hand were fully equipped for war displaying their might and grandeur. They were determined to wipe out the Muslims. When the two groups met at a place called Badr, the Makkans were

already celebrating victory when they saw the sorry state of the Muslim 'army'.

This verse was revealed to encourage the Muslims to not lose hope.

This verse in particular and other verses are often mis-represented and taken out of context by people trying to show a distorted image of Islam. People who study Islam without any prejudice see a totally different image.

Usually the context of the verse is enough to clear any misconception people have.

## **Was Islam spread by the sword?**

This is another age old myth which was originally used by the orientalist to discredit Islam and to generate support in Europe against the Muslims. However, this has very little support in actual history and when we look back at some of the other claims we find how ridiculous many of them were.

Quotations are given below from some respected historians and Scholars on the subject of the spreading of Islam by the sword.

*“History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races, is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.” (De Lacy O’leary – Islam at the Crossroads)*

*“...Perhaps one place to start is with the figure of Muhammad, a complex, passionate man who sometimes did things that are difficult for us to accept, but who had genius of a profound order and founded a religion and a cultural tradition that was not based on the sword (despite the*

*Western myth), and whose name 'Islam' signifies peace and reconciliation.” (Karen Armstrong – A Western Attempt to Understanding Islam)*

If we stop to think and take a look at history we will see that the Arab lands have been ruled by Muslims for the vast majority of 1400 years, yet there are over 14 million Arabs who are Coptic Christians (Christians from generations). If Islam was spread by the sword then they would also have become Muslims.

The fastest growing religion in the UK, USA and indeed the whole world is Islam. Again no one is forcing people to accept Islam.

The truth of the matter is that Allah says in the Qur'an, *“There is no compulsion in religion.”* (Baqarah 256). Thus it is not permissible to force anyone into accepting Islam.

According to Seerah (Life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)), when Islam had spread to Madina the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) told the Muslims to encourage the Jews of Madina to practice their religion (Judaism).

In Muslim Spain, the golden age of Islam was also the golden age of Judaism. The Jews who came to Spain were allowed to follow their faith openly without any interference. They were treated with justice and respect. The Christians in Spain were also allowed to live by their own scripture and had their own courts. During this period of eight hundred or so years they enjoyed unparalleled religious freedom.

Later when the Muslims were forcefully evicted from Spain, they were literally wiped out. There was not a single Muslim in Spain who could openly give the call for prayers. At the same time the Jews were also persecuted. Those Jews who managed to

flee from Spain, again travelled back to Muslim lands because of the protection and freedom they enjoyed from the Muslims.

## Does Islam support terrorism?

Islam condemns any action in which civilians or innocent people are hurt or injured. Even at the time of warfare, there are guidelines for armies so that innocent people and property are always protected.

This was the command given by Abu Bakr to the Muslim armies during the early history of Islam:

*"Stop, O people... Do not commit treachery or deviate from the right path. You must not mutilate dead bodies. Neither kill a child, nor a woman, nor an aged man. Bring no harm to the trees, nor burn them with fire, especially those that are fruitful. Slay not any of the enemy's flock, save for your food. You are likely to pass by people who have devoted their lives to monastic services; leave them alone..."*

Even at the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), whenever a conflict of any kind existed, peace and reconciliation was preferred to fighting. There are numerous examples of this in the life of Muhammad (pbuh).

More recently, Mufti Habibur Rehman addressed a peace rally attended by thousands of Muslim clergy and Students in India. The Mufti Sahib is the principle of the oldest Darul Uloom (Deoband) in India which has links with hundreds of Islamic schools throughout the world. They are also the cornerstone of many mosques in the UK.

His fatwa (Islamic verdict) was issued on 31st May 2008 which condemns terrorism and all forms of violence against civilians and innocent people.

*"The religion of Islam has come to wipe out all kinds of terrorism and to spread the message of global peace,"* the grand mufti Habibur Rehman said in the fatwa.

*"Islam rejects all kinds of unjust violence, breach of peace, bloodshed, murder and plunder and does not allow it in any form".*

The Mufti gave many examples of support to enforce this fatwa. He also said that Islam holds all life sacred and to save one life is like saving the whole of humanity.

The respected Mufti Sahib called the conference historic as Muslims of different sects and ideologies attended and participated in addressing the terrorism issue and ratifying this fatwa. This demonstrated that the Muslim world, with its various schools of thought, is unanimously against terrorism.

This was headline news in the East but unfortunately many such stories never filter into mainstream media in the West.

## Does Islam degrade women by keeping them behind the veil?

The Hijab is one of the most misunderstood concepts of Islam. Hijab is usually used to explain the dress code of Muslims and more specifically of Muslim women.

The Islamic dress code can be split into four categories:

**Extent-** The minimum extent for men is from the naval to the knees. For women, the compulsory amount covers the whole body excluding the hands, feet and face. The veiling of the face is also emphasised and many women feel proud to veil their face because the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would cover their face.

**Revealing-** The clothes should not be transparent or tight that they reveal the shape of the body. This is the case for both genders.

**Dress type-** The clothes should not be of the opposite gender. This means that men should not wear clothes that resemble women's clothes and vice versa. The clothes (inc. jewellery) should not resemble those of other religions (e.g. wearing a cross).

**Glamorous-** The clothes should not be so glamorous or extravagant that they attract the opposite gender.

In today's society we see that women's sexual appeal is used for marketing many products. There was once an advertisement for a car with a woman in a bikini standing next to it and it read 'Take her for a test drive'. But, when it comes to the hijab people say we should ban it to liberate Muslim women. When such issues are raised, it is the women who wear the hijab that stand up and say, "Don't take away our freedom to wear the hijab."

*"The attention I got from the other sex changed. Instead of a sexual approach, they had to take an interest in what was in my head and in my personality, rather than my body."* (Jasmin - The Guardian (London) Saturday December 8, 2001)

The reality is that Islam has given women a liberated and high status which is also appreciated by the west.

*"He placed woman on the same footing as man in legal processes and in financial independence; she might follow any legitimate profession, keep her earnings, inherit property and dispose of her belongings at will."* (Will Durant – The Age of Faith)

*"And preaching to his people he said, 'God*

*enjoins you to treat women well for they are your mothers, daughters and aunts. The most perfect muslim is he whose disposition is best and the best of you are they who behave best with their wives'. Thirteen hundred years ago, Islam made a woman free and independent in the enjoyment of her possessions."* (Rev. V. C. Badley – The Messenger)

## **Do Muslims prefer Sons to daughters?**

Admittedly, in Arab culture, there was a time when having a daughter was considered shameful and dishonourable. Many despicable crimes such as infanticide was carried out so that they don't have to live with this 'shame'.

However, these are precisely the barbaric and unjust practices that Islam challenged and eradicated from Arabia. It was through the advent of Islam that many evil actions were removed. The recipients of the message became world leaders in piety and justice.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself had daughters whom he loved and cared for. We learn from Hadith that Muhammad (pbuh) said:

*"Whoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not prefer his son over her, God will enter him into paradise."* (Ibn Hambal)

The Prophet (pbuh) said, "If a person has three daughters whom he gives shelter and raises them showing mercy and compassion to them. Paradise is assured for him"

Someone asked what if the person has only two daughters.

The prophet replied, "Even if someone has two daughters."

In Islam, there are no reasons why a person should prefer a son to a daughter and vice versa. For some people, personal or cultural circumstances may dictate otherwise.

## **Why are Muslim women forced into marriage?**

In Islam, no one (male or female) can be forced into marriage against their wishes. A marriage expressly needs consent from both parties before it can go ahead.

A lady came to Muhammad (pbuh) and said that she had been forced into marriage. Muhammad (pbuh) replied that she had a right to annul the marriage.

From this we can see that there is no place for forced marriages in Islam and in the case of arranged marriages, there has to be consent from both parties before the marriage can legally take place.

Islamic law (Shariah) requires that there has to be two witnesses to the consent and marriage for it to be valid.

## **Why are Muslim women deprived of Education?**

It is the sacred duty of every believer to gain knowledge. This education does not stop at the 'school leaving age' but continues until the final moments of a person's life. This principle applies to both women and men.

These are not ideas dreamed up by 'modern' Muslims but are actually the fundamentals of Islam. These principles date back to the time of Muhammad (pbuh) and find its basis in both the Qur'an and Hadith.

We see modern Muslim women who are

highly educated and who take an active academic role in society. This has been the norm for centuries and is not a modern day phenomena.

Even from the early days of Islam, we find some of our most prominent scholars were women. Learned men and scholars would come to them, to discuss issues such as Islamic Jurisprudence (fiqh).

Even when different cultures were against the education of women, Islam was a liberating force which taught that education and spirituality were both noble qualities which should be found in every Muslims.

## **Do Muslims believe in Jesus?**

To begin with lets have a look at Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the Qur'an, Allah has named one of the chapters Maryam (Mary). In this chapter Allah says, *"Verily Allah has selected you and purified you and chosen you above all the women of the world."* (Qur'an)

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, *"The best women are four: Mary, the mother of Jesus..."*

The Qur'an also gives numerous references describing the piety of Mary.

Muslims believe that Jesus was born miraculously, without any male intervention, just as Adam was created without a mother and father. Jesus is considered to be one of the mightiest messengers of Allah and was the messiah. Allah blessed Jesus with many miracles.

The first miracle of Jesus was that he spoke whilst still in the cradle. He said, *"Verily! I am a slave of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet; and He has made me blessed where so ever I be, and has enjoined me prayer, and Zakah (charity), as long as I live, and dutiful to my mother, and*

*made me not arrogant, unblessed. And salaam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!"*

Just as Jesus' entry to this world was miraculous, his departure from this world was also miraculous. The Qur'an specifically states, *"..and they killed him not, and nor did they crucify him."* Muslims believe Jesus was raised to the heavens and will again return in a time when evil will be rife. Jesus will live a normal life and will pass away like other humans. Jesus will be resurrected on the day of Judgement with the rest of mankind.

In Islam, Jesus has the highest status a person can be blessed with and that is being a mighty messenger of Allah (God) - a prophet.

There are many common grounds between Islam and Christianity when it comes to the person of Jesus. There are also some key differences such as the divinity of Jesus.

## **So what about redemption and forgiveness in Islam?**

If a person sins, he needs to turn to Allah (God Almighty) and ask for forgiveness. If he turns to Allah with a sincere heart, feeling remorse and intends to not repeat this transgression, Allah will forgive him.

Allah tells us many times in the Qur'an that he is the oft-forgiving, the most merciful.

*"Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins (except shirk): for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (39:53)*

*"And it is He who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons the evil deed and knows what you do." (42:25)*

In Islam, we don't need an intermediately or agent but instead have a direct link with our Creator.

## **Why is Alcohol banned in Islam?**

Allah says in the Qur'an, *"...in them (Intoxicants and gambling) there is great sin and benefit for man; the sin far outweighs the benefit."*

Alcohol plays a major factor in many of the ills of society today. Alcohol related health problems and crime are just two of the many problems on an increase in the United Kingdom. This illness is spreading to the youth with the number of under age drinkers at an all time high.

Although what is referred to as a social drink may have some benefits, going beyond the social level has many detriments. In Islam, what is forbidden in large quantities is also forbidden in small quantities, thus removing the urge to even adopt the social level.

When alcohol is forbidden everything connected to alcohol is also forbidden: manufacturing, transporting, delivering, selling or promoting it. In fact, even growing grapes to make alcohol is forbidden thus removing the illness from the roots.

This also applies to drugs and other intoxicants. Growing or making drugs is forbidden; trafficking drugs is forbidden just as buying or selling drugs is forbidden.

## **Is Islam intolerant to Christians and their culture in Scotland?**

Islam holds the people of the Book (the Jews and Christians) in high esteem. Islamic teachings have always encouraged

respect for them. In Muslim lands, Islam has always allowed Jews and Christians to practice their faith and worship without any hindrance from others. This was the case 1400 years ago and is still the case today.

Muslims have no issues with people having crosses on their churches, giving Christmas cards, nativity plays in schools... often this is the media's 'shock factor headlines' trying to improve circulation.

These types of ideas are as surprising to Muslims as to non-Muslims.

## Is Islam still relevant in this day and age?

Islam is a religion for the whole world until the Day of Judgement. Just as Islam was a cure for physical, mental, spiritual, and social illnesses in the past, it is also a cure for the illnesses today as it will be for the illnesses of tomorrow.

*"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess the assimilating capability to the changing phases of existence which can make itself appeal to every age... I believe that if a man like him (Muhammad) were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring the much needed peace and happiness: I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today..."* (George Bernard Shaw – The Genuine Islam)

*"Islam is the only solution for all the ills of the world. This is no idle boast on my part."* (Thomas Arnold – Caliphate)  
Islam is not just a set of beliefs. It is a way

of life which is led with a constant awareness of God using God's law- the Qur'an. The law covers every aspect of our life which makes Islam a simple comprehensible and practical religion.

*"In the Koran... are rules not only for manners and hygiene, marriage and divorce and the treatment of children, slaves and animals, but also for commerce and politics, interest and debts, contracts and wills, industry and finance, crime and punishment... Its message raised the moral and cultural level of its followers, promoted social order and unity, inculcated hygiene, lessened superstition and cruelty..."* (Will Durant – The Age of Faith)

Islam brings Mankind to one level removing any form of discrimination.

*"...While previously men had suffered from the injustices of social differences, Islam proclaimed equality among human beings. Each Muslim was distinguished from other Muslims not by reason of birth or any other factor not connected with his personality, but only by his fear of God, his deeds and his good moral and intellectual qualities."* (Professor Laura Veccia Vaglieri – An Interpretation of Islam)

## Finally...

In the media, there are many ideas and actions promoted in the name of Islam which are completely alien to the teachings of Islam. Often misconceptions do exist of which some have been addressed in this newsletter.

Some of the answers are very concise and may need to be addressed more fully for some readers. Some answers may need clarification or may even generate more questions. Please feel free to contact us in person or even by email.